

SHRIDATTA



The *Kathasaritsagara* (The ocean of stories) of Somadeva is really an abridged version of that great treasure—the *Brihatkatha*. No version of the *Brihatkatha* has come to us, though we have many poems and plays in Sanskrit which draw on it for themes. The *Kathasaritsagara*, however, preserves, though in a very terse form, this great heritage. It abounds in tales of romance and adventure in wondrous worlds up in the sky, or in the bowels of the earth, or on the bed of the ocean, peopled by persons and semi-divine beings who deal in magic as an everyday commodity.

The story of Shridatta (a gift of Shri, that is Lakshmi) is adapted from one such tale. Shridatta is a universal favourite as one would expect a gift from the Goddess Lakshmi to be.

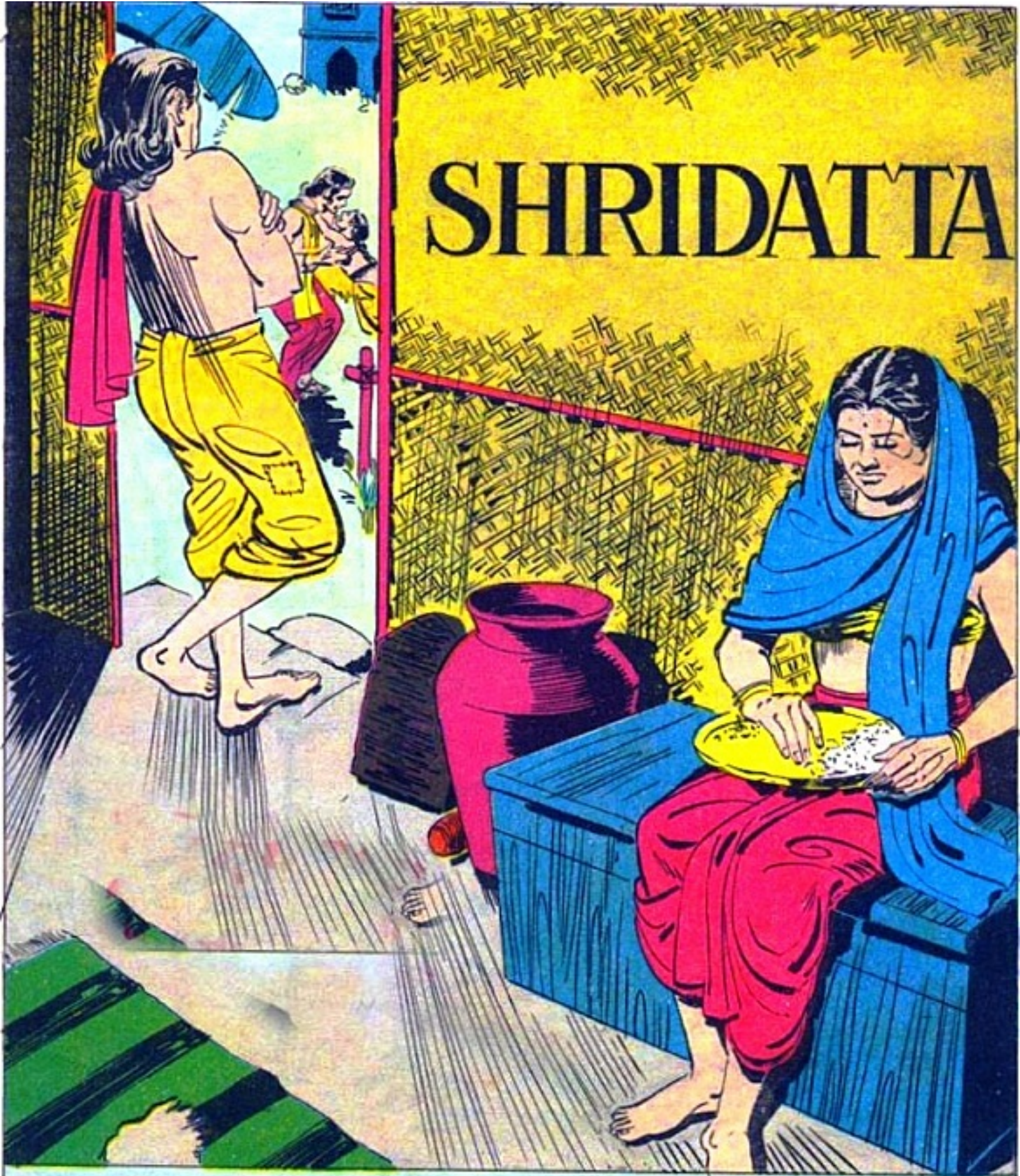


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SHRIDATTA



KALANEMI AND HIS WIFE LIVED IN THE CITY OF PATALIPUTRA.
THEY WERE VERY POOR. THEY HAD NO CHILDREN.

EVERYBODY SEEMS
TO HAVE LOTS
OF MONEY TO
SPEND.

AND
CHILDREN
TO LOVE.

LET'S PRAY TO
SHRIDEVI TO GIVE
US CHILDREN
AND MONEY.

A GOOD
IDEA!

SO THEY PERFORMED A SACRIFICE TO SHRIDEVI, THE GODDESS OF WEALTH.



THE GODDESS APPEARED BEFORE THEM.

I AM PLEASED
WITH YOU. YOUR
DESIRES SHALL
BE FULFILLED.



SOON, A SON WAS BORN TO THEM.

ISN'T HE A FINE
BABY?



LET US CALL HIM SHRIDATTA
AS HE IS A GIFT OF
SHRIDEVI.



SOON AFTER
THAT—

I HAVE MADE
A BIG PROFIT
THIS MONTH.

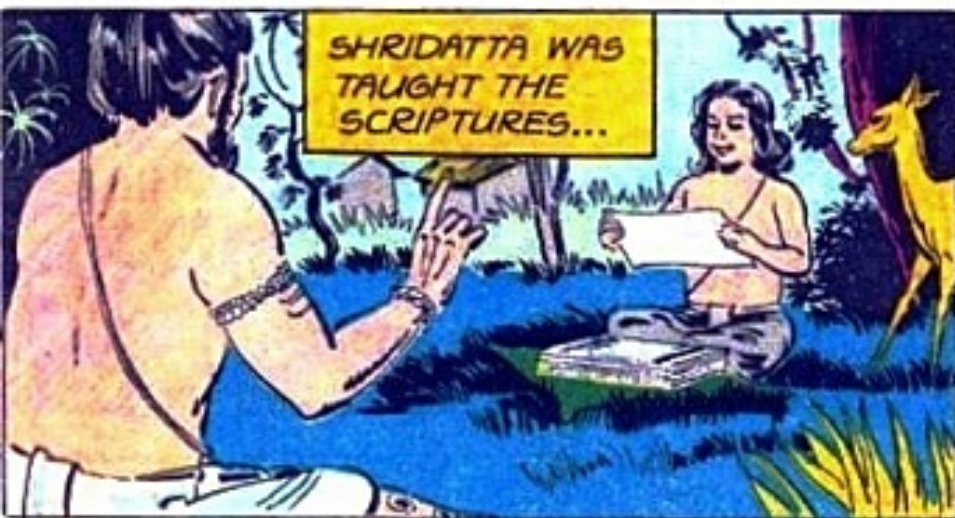
IT IS ALL THE
GIFT OF
SHRIDEVI.

I SHALL
NOW BE ABLE
TO ENGAGE THE
BEST
TEACHERS
FOR YOU.

SHRIDATTA WAS
TAUGHT THE
SCRIPTURES...

...THE FINE ARTS...

...AND THE ART OF WAR.



HE GREW UP AS GOOD AS HE WAS TALENTED.



THE KING OF PATALIPUTRA HEARD OF SHRIDATTA. KALANEMI AND SHRIDATTA WERE INVITED TO THE COURT.



THE KING SOON BECAME VERY FOND OF SHRIDATTA.



SHRIDATTA MADE MANY FRIENDS AT COURT—

I WISH SHRIDATTA
WERE OUR
PRINCE.

HE IS AS
COURTEOUS AS
VIKRAMASHAKTI
IS RUDE.

I WOULD GIVE
MY LIFE FOR
SHRIDATTA.

ALL THIS MADE
VIKRAMASHAKTI
JEALOUS OF
SHRIDATTA.

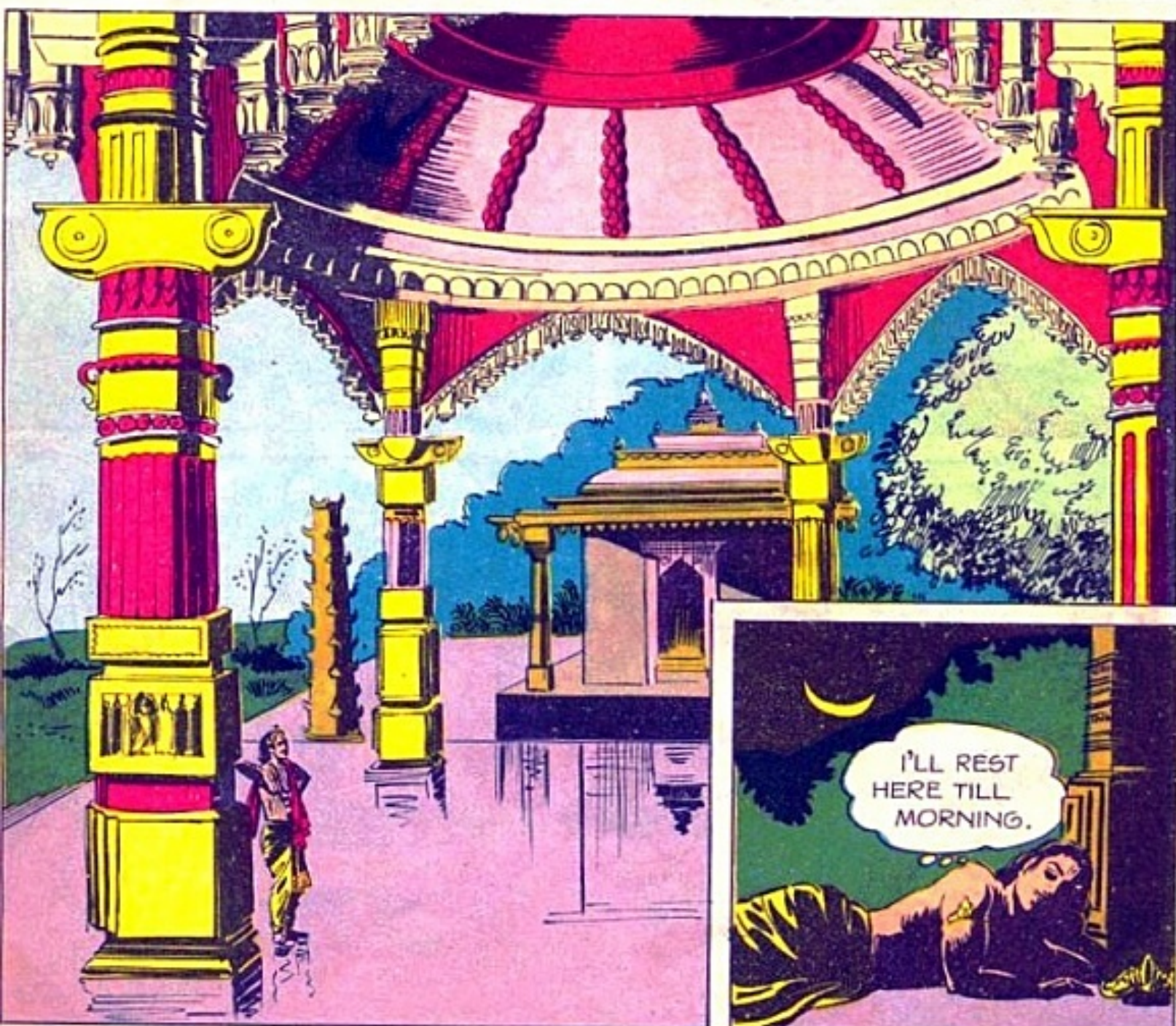
ONE OF THESE
DAYS I'LL GET
EVEN WITH
HIM.

A FEW DAYS LATER SHRIDATTA AND HIS
FRIENDS WERE NEAR THE RIVER GANGA. SUDDENLY—

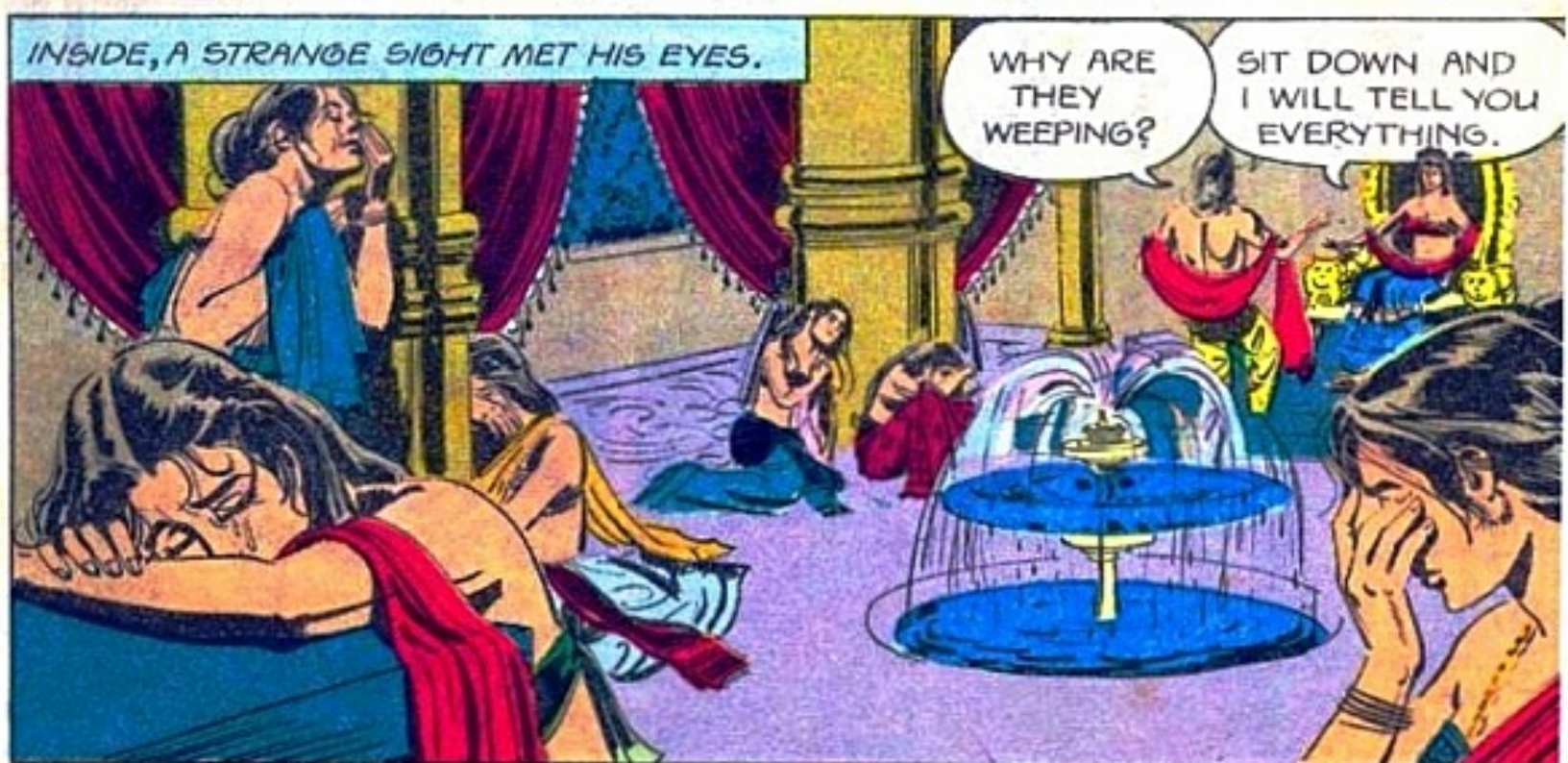
HELP!
HELP!

I MUST
HELP
HER.

TAKE CARE,
SHRIDATTA.
WE'LL WAIT TILL
YOU COME BACK.



THE NEXT MORNING—



I AM AN ĀSURA PRINCESS —
THE GRANDDAUGHTER OF
THE MIGHTY BALI.



"WHEN LORD VISHNU DEFEATED
MY GRANDFATHER, BY
STEPPING ON HIS HEAD..."



"...HE DROVE US
OUT OF TRIPURA."



"A LION GUARDS THE GATE
TO OUR CITY."



THAT LION CAN BE
KILLED ONLY BY
A STRONG
HUMAN
BEING.



PLEASE
LET ME
TRY.

THAT
IS WHY
I BROUGHT
YOU
HERE!



THE VERY NEXT DAY SHRIDATTA
FOUGHT THE LION.



THAT
SHOULD KILL
HIM.

TO HIS SURPRISE THE LION TURNED
INTO A *YAKSHA.

I AM GRATEFUL TO
YOU, SHRIDATTA.
YOU HAVE RELEASED
ME FROM A CURSE.



THIS SWORD
IS CALLED
MRIGANKAKA.
TAKE IT.



WITH IT, YOU
WILL ALWAYS
WIN.

*YAKSHAS ARE SEMI-DIVINE BEINGS, OF WHOM KUBERA WAS THE LORD.

THEN IT WAS THE TURN OF THE ASURA PRINCESS TO EXPRESS HER GRATITUDE.



MEANWHILE —

SHRIDATTA HAS BEEN AWAY FOR SO LONG!
WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM?

HE MAY BE IN DANGER...OR
EVEN DEAD.

JUST THEN A VOICE WAS
HEARD.

SHRIDATTA
IS ALIVE!
HE WILL SOON
BE WITH YOU.

ANXIOUS TO GIVE SHRIDATTA'S PARENTS THE GOOD
NEWS, THEY RUSHED TOWARDS THE CITY, BUT ON
THEIR WAY THEY WERE STOPPED BY FRIENDS.

GO TO UJJAIN. I'LL
HIDE NEAR THE RIVER
AND BRING
SHRIDATTA
TO YOU.

DON'T GO TO PATALIPUTRA.
THE KING DIED YESTERDAY.
VIKRAMASHAKTI HAS KILLED
SHRIDATTA'S PARENTS AND
IS NOW LOOKING FOR YOU.

WHEN SHRIDATTA CAME OUT OF THE GANGA -

WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

SHH! COME QUIETLY INTO THE WOODS AND I'LL TELL YOU. IT'S A LONG STORY.

SHRIDATTA WAS HORRIFIED WHEN HE HEARD THE NEWS.

I'LL AVENGE MY PARENTS WITH MRIGANKAKA, MY DIVINE SWORD.

LET'S FIRST GO TO UJJAIN WHERE THE OTHERS ARE WAITING.

AT UJJAIN -

YOU ARE ALWAYS MOODY, SHRIDATTA.

I HAVE REASON ENOUGH. MY PARENTS HAVE BEEN KILLED AND I HAVE NOT YET AVENGED THEIR MURDER.

LET'S GO TO THE FAIR. IT WILL CHEER YOU UP.

AT THE FAIR—

WHO IS THAT
LOVELY GIRL?

SHE IS PRINCESS
MRIGANKAVATI, THE
ONLY CHILD
OF OUR
KING.

HE WANTS HER TO
MARRY A RICH AND
POWERFUL PRINCE.
ONE FIT TO BECOME
HIS HEIR.

SUDDENLY—

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

THE PRINCESS HAS BEEN
BITTEN BY A SNAKE.

THE PRINCESS WAS
CARRIED AWAY TO A
HUT NEAR BY.

I CAN
SAVE HER
LIFE.

WHAT ARE
WE WAITING
FOR THEN?

THE
VIR
SHR
IS NO

THEY HURRIED TO THE HUT WHERE THE PRINCESS WAS LAID OUT.

ALAS! MY MISTRESS
IS COLD AND
STILL.

LET ME IN! I CAN
REVIVE
HER.

MAKE WAY
FOR HIM.

LET ME PUT THIS
MAGIC
RING ON
HER
FINGER.

WHO IS HE?

THERE IS NO HOPE.
BUT LET HIM TRY.

AS SHRIDATTA PUT THE RING ON HER FINGER THE PRINCESS SLOWLY
REGAINED
CONSCIOUSNESS.

WHAT IS THE MATTER?
WHO IS THIS
STRANGER?

HE SAVED
YOUR LIFE. YOU
WERE BITTEN
BY A SNAKE.

SHRIDATTA AND
THE PRINCESS
GAZED LONG
AT EACH OTHER.

MY SAVIOUR!
I OWE MY
LIFE TO YOU.

HOW BEAUTIFUL
SHE IS! I WISH
SHE WERE MINE.

JUST THEN THE KING ENTERED.

WHAT IS HAPPENING
HERE? HOW IS
MRIGANKAVATI?

I'M ALL
RIGHT NOW,
FATHER.

SHE WAS BITTEN BY
A SNAKE. THIS
MAN HAS JUST
REVIVED HER.

I'LL SEE THAT YOU ARE
PROPERLY REWARDED,
MY SON!

I DON'T WANT A
REWARD. I AM
GLAD I WAS
THERE IN TIME.

AS SHRIDATTA AND HIS FRIENDS WALKED AWAY-

I JUST REMEMBERED...

MIND YOUR STEP. WHAT ARE YOU THINKING OF?



...I HAVE FORGOTTEN MY RING THERE.

SHALL I FETCH IT?

DON'T. IT WILL GIVE SHRIDATTA AN EXCUSE TO MEET HER AGAIN.



LATER MRIGANKAVATI'S MAID CAME TO THEIR HUT.

SIR, YOU LEFT YOUR PRECIOUS RING BEHIND. MY MISTRESS WOULD LIKE TO RETURN IT PERSONALLY.

I WILL WAIT FOR HER THIS EVENING IN THE OLD TEMPLE OUTSIDE THE CITY.



THAT EVENING WHEN THEY MET —

I LOVE YOU,
MRIGANKAVATI.
WILL YOU
MARRY ME?

MY FATHER WILL
NEVER AGREE. HE
WANTS ME TO
MARRY A RICH
AND POWERFUL
PRINCE.

THEN COME
AWAY
WITH ME.

I CAN'T
LIVE
WITHOUT
YOU.

I WILL.

THAT NIGHT—

SHRIDATTA, YOU MUST BE
SEEN IN THE CITY TOMORROW
SO THAT PEOPLE WON'T
CONNECT YOU WITH
MRIGANKAVATI'S
DISAPPEARANCE.

YOU ARE
RIGHT. I'LL JOIN
YOU LATER. TAKE
CARE OF
HER.

DON'T
WORRY.

MRIGANKAVATI'S DISAPPEARANCE CREATED A STIR THE NEXT MORNING.



SHRIDATTA SET OUT TO JOIN HIS FRIENDS.

EVERYONE THINKS
I HAVE GONE TO
PATALIPUTRA...



...BUT I'LL
SOON BE
WITH
MRIGANKAVATI.



BUT WHEN HE RODE UP TO HIS FRIENDS —

WHAT'S THE
MATTER?
WHERE IS
MRIGANKAVATI?

SOME HORSEMEN
ATTACKED US. THEY
TOOK OUR HORSES...

...AND
MRIGANKAVATI
TOO.



GO AFTER
THEM! RESCUE
HER.

WHAT
ABOUT
YOU?



DON'T WORRY
ABOUT US.
GO. HURRY!



SHRIDATTA SOON CAUGHT UP WITH THE HORSEMEN.

AH! THERE GO THE
VILLAINS.

STOP!
STOP!

HE ATTACKED THEM.

MY DIVINE
SWORD WILL
NEVER FAIL
ME.

I THOUGHT
YOU WOULD
NEVER COME.

I'LL SET
YOU FREE.

ON THE RETURN JOURNEY—

NOW TO HELP MY FRIENDS.

THEY TRIED SO
HARD TO
PROTECT ME.



AFTER THEY HAD COVERED
SOME DISTANCE—

OUR HORSE IS TIRED.
WE MUST DISMOUNT
AND LET HIM REST.



AS THEY DISMOUNTED, THE HORSE COLLAPSED.


POOR FELLOW! HE
DID HIS BEST.
WE MUST WALK NOW.



I CANNOT WALK.
I AM TIRED
AND THIRSTY.


IT HAS BEEN TOO
MUCH FOR YOU.
REST HERE WHILE
I FIND WATER.






DO NOT GO FAR. I AM FRIGHTENED.

I'LL SOON BE BACK.




I MUST MARK THE WAY CAREFULLY. THE FOREST IS GETTING DENSER AND I MIGHT GET LOST.

SHRIDATTA AT LAST FOUND WATER. ON HIS WAY BACK —




DID I COME BY THIS TREE OR BY THAT? BOTH LOOK ALIKE. THE LIGHT HAS CHANGED, AND I CAN'T DISTINGUISH THEM.


A person with dark skin and yellow markings on their legs is climbing a large tree in a jungle. The sky is a deep red, indicating dusk or dawn. The ground is covered with blue grass and white flowers. The person is looking up towards the top of the tree.

IT'S GETTING DARK.
I'LL CLIMB THIS
TREE. MAYBE I CAN
SEE HER FROM
UP THERE.

BUT—

A person with dark skin and yellow markings on their legs is standing in a jungle. They are looking down at the ground, which is covered with blue grass and white flowers. The sky is a deep red, indicating dusk or dawn. The person is holding a branch of a tree.

IN THE FADING
LIGHT I CAN'T
RECOGNISE
A THING.

A person with dark skin and yellow markings on their legs is sitting on the ground in a jungle. They are looking down at the ground, which is covered with blue grass and white flowers. The sky is a deep red, indicating dusk or dawn. The person is holding a branch of a tree.

I WILL HAVE TO WAIT
HERE TILL MORNING.
MAY GOD PROTECT MY
POOR MRIGANKAVATI!

MEANWHILE —

WHAT COULD HAVE
HAPPENED TO HIM?
WHY ISN'T HE
BACK?

IF SOMEONE
COMES WHAT
SHALL I DO?

WHAT IS THAT
NOISE? IS IT
A LION?

GRRR!
KRRK!

IT WAS ONLY A HUNTER.


EEEEEE!

DON'T BE
AFRAID,
LADY!



GOOD SIR,
PLEASE
TAKE ME
AWAY
FROM
HERE!


WHO ARE
YOU? WHY
ARE YOU
HERE
ALONE?



M... MY HUSBAND WENT TO
FETCH WATER. HE MUST
HAVE LOST HIS WAY.
HE IS NOT BACK
YET.

COME! I'LL TAKE YOU
TO MATHURA. IT IS NOT
FAR FROM HERE.

OUTSIDE THE CITY OF MATHURA—



THE PRIME MINISTER
IS A GOOD MAN. WE'LL
GO TO HIS HOUSE.
THEY WILL TAKE
CARE OF YOU.

BUT HOW
WILL MY
SHRIDATTA
FIND ME?
PERHAPS
I SHOULDN'T
HAVE
COME
AWAY.



I'LL GO BACK TOMORROW
AND TELL HIM YOU
ARE HERE.

YOU ARE VERY
KIND, SIR.

THE HUNTER LEFT MRIGANKAVATI IN
THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE AND
RETURNED TO THE FOREST.



THIS IS WHERE I FOUND
HER. I WILL WAIT
HERE FOR
SHRIDATTA.

SHRIDATTA TOO, WAS ON HIS
WAY BACK.

BY DAYLIGHT, THE
WAY IS SO CLEAR.
THIS IS THE PLACE.



WHEN HE REACHED THE SPOT WHERE HE HAD LEFT MRIGANKAVATI—



ARE YOU
SHRIDATTA?

I AM. WHO
ARE YOU? HOW
DO YOU KNOW
MY NAME?



SUDDENLY —



WHEN THEY REACHED THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE —





MRIGANKAVATI WENT WITH HER UNCLE AND AUNT TO UJJAIN.

I AM THE PRIME MINISTER OF MATHURA. MRIGANKAVATI IS MY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

I AM SO RELIEVED TO SEE YOU. WHY DID YOU RUN AWAY?

FORGIVE ME, FATHER.

SHRIDATTA FOUND HIS FRIENDS AND BROUGHT THEM TO UJJAIN.

YOU MUST CHALLENGE VIKRAMASHAKTI.

WE'LL MAKE YOU THE KING OF PATALIPUTRA.

THE KING OF MATHURA WILL BE ON OUR SIDE. YOU CAN DEPEND ON THAT.

I'LL COLLECT AN ARMY AND WE WILL ATTACK PATALIPUTRA.

MRIGANKAVATI'S FATHER MADE A BOLD DECISION.

A TERRIBLE BATTLE WAS FOUGHT OUTSIDE PATALIPUTRA, IN WHICH...



...SHRIDATTA KILLED VIKRAMASHAKTI.

I HAVE
AVENGED MY
PARENTS'
DEATH
AT LAST.



SHRIDATTA BECAME KING OF
PATALIPUTRA AND REIGNED HAPPILY
THERE WITH MRIGANKAVATI.



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